

What everyone should know about the Millennium Bug




About the bug	1
At home	3
Business as usual	5
Personal computing	6
Services to the home	7
Personal finance	9
Health	11
Emergency services	13
Shops and service stations	15
Your local area	17
Travelling overseas	19
International	21

About the bug

Every time you read a paper or watch a video, even when you're choosing what to buy for dinner, somewhere along the line a computer or electronic system will have been involved. Because we rely so heavily on these systems, the government and business have taken the Millennium Bug very seriously.

What is the Millennium Bug?

It's not a virus and you certainly can't catch it. In a nutshell, the Millennium Bug is what happens if a computer or electronic system doesn't recognise the year 2000.



The root of the problem lies in the early days of computing when memory capacity was limited. Programmers saved memory space by representing dates with two digits rather than four (e.g. '99 rather than 1999).

So when the date changes to 2000, unlike you and I, these systems might not recognise the two digit 00 date. They might think it's 1900 or even some other date and potentially create problems in systems that use a year date to function.



Also, since 1900 was not a leap year and 2000 is, some systems might not recognise the 29th February 2000 and may move straight from the 28th February to the 1st March. This could result in problems because computer calendars would then be running a day ahead of real time.

What happens when computers get the date wrong?

Computer systems that are affected may shut down, not start or produce incorrect or erroneous information.

For example, in 1992 Hilda celebrated her 104th birthday, so she was rather puzzled when her local nursery school invited her to enrol for a class. Because the nursery school database logged

Hilda's birth as being in '88, it mistook these two digits for 1988, rather than 1888. Because it stored dates in just two digits, the database thought she was 4 years old.



MILLENNIUM TIPS

- The Millennium Bug has provided fraudsters with the opportunity for scams. Beware of anyone using the Millennium Bug as an excuse to ask for confidential details or to 'fix' your household appliances.
- Because of potentially high staff costs, the price of goods and services over the millennium may increase, so check carefully before hiring or buying.
- Due to the extra Bank Holiday be prepared for some services to be reduced.

BEATING THE BUG

Action 2000 co-ordinates the independent assessment programme of the UK's essential services, the results of which are made available to the public. Action 2000 also works with business helping them prepare for the Year 2000, and provides information to the public so they have all the facts about the Millennium Bug.

What could it affect?

The Millennium Bug could affect anything that uses a year date to function. For instance your personal computer, computer systems used by major companies, or even your local supermarket. That's why over the last few years, organisations have made extensive preparations to ensure they are free of any Millennium Bug problems.

Facts not fiction

You've probably already heard stories about the Millennium Bug. Some will be true, some exaggerated and others are total hype. This booklet will give you the information you need to sort the facts from the fiction.



What should I do as the year 2000 approaches?

Please read this booklet and keep it handy. It has useful tips and signposts to more information. There are also spaces to write your own local contact numbers that could be useful in the future.

Offer a helping hand

If you have elderly friends or relatives who need further explanation about the Millennium Bug, or reassurance about their appliances, please offer your help.

If you need more copies of this booklet, translations or alternative formats, complete and return the order form on page 22.

FICTION

"The Millennium Bug will strike as the clocks chime midnight on New Year's Eve."



The Millennium Bug could have an effect any time a computer or an electronic system uses a date after the 31st December 1999.

Some systems won't be affected. For example, accountancy firms and pension providers have been using dates with the year 2000 for many years, without any problems. Generally where there may be a problem it can be fixed.

Further information

At the end of each section, you'll find 'Further information'. It will point you in the right direction if you would like to find out more on that subject.

■ www.bug2000.co.uk The Action 2000 website is regularly updated and has lots of additional information on all the sectors covered in this booklet as well as links to other key websites and helplines.

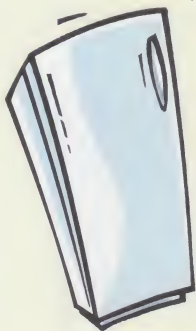
■ Call Action 2000's Actionline on 0845 601 2000 or from the 22nd November 1999 you can check ITV Teletext page 348 for the latest updates on Millennium Bug issues.

At home

Kettles will boil, toasters will pop, and microwaves will still cook. As the

Millennium Bug can only affect equipment that uses a year date, very few household appliances can potentially be affected.

So the fridge, the washing machine, the TV and almost everything else in your home will continue to work in 2000 just as it did in 1999.



Appliances with a year date

Most household appliances that do use a year date have been pre-programmed to recognise the Year 2000, so the vast majority will work as normal.

However if your **fax machine**, **camcorder** or **watch** starts displaying the wrong date, you can usually reset it by referring to the user guide. But in any case, it won't stop working.

If your video does display the wrong date it may make it difficult to pre-set your video to record, although it should work quite normally when manually controlled.



Even if your video won't recognise the Year 2000, you may still be able to programme your video to record TV programmes

by setting the date to 1972, as

both 1972 and 2000 are leap years with matching days and dates. This workaround should only be used for domestic appliances.

VIDEO TESTING TIP

Set date and time to 31/12/99 at 23.55. Programme the machine to tape something in 10 minutes and watch to see if the clock ticks over and performs the task. Repeat the same test to check that your video passes from the 28th to the 29th February 2000. If this happens, your video should have no problems. If it fails, contact the retailer or the manufacturer.

Burglar alarms

Most household alarm systems only store dates by day and month so they cannot be affected by the Millennium Bug. If yours has a year function, or you're not sure, check with your maintenance company or contact The National Approval Council for Security Systems (NACOSS) on the number listed in 'Further information'.



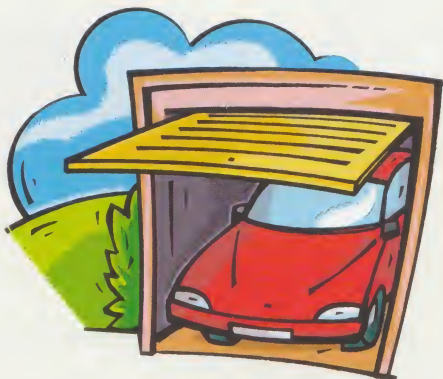
If you go away from home

If you're going away for the holiday period, it is a good idea to leave your keys with a trusted friend or neighbour, so that they can keep an eye on things. And don't forget to give their contact details to your burglar alarm call centre.

Consider using timer switches to turn your lights on and off, so the house appears occupied. Your Neighbourhood Watch Group will also be able to offer support, particularly if you're elderly or on your own.

Cars

Although most modern vehicles have computer chips on board, their function is not generally date dependent. So your car will not be affected by the millennium date change. The same goes for vans, camper-vans, trailers and motorbikes.



Communal buildings

If you live in a building with shared alarms, lifts, entry systems, heating and lighting they are unlikely to be affected because they don't generally use a year date.

But do ask your building's maintenance personnel, or the owner, just to be sure everything has been checked.

BEATING THE BUG

With satellite TV, a computerised system tells the transmission dish where to point to find the satellite on any given day.

One satellite broadcasting company discovered that the Millennium Bug could affect this system, with the result that their dish would be pointing at empty space on the 1st January 2000 and unable to transmit a signal. Happily, the company had plenty of time to remedy the problem and will be broadcasting as usual into the new millennium.

FICTION

"My friend tells me my central heating won't work in the Year 2000 because of the Millennium Bug."



You would be able to programme your central heating to come on this weekend, but you can't programme it to come on next winter. That's because home central heating systems don't have a year function, which means the date won't affect them. Some business heating systems, however, do have a year function and should be checked.

Many retailers and manufacturers have published guarantees that their products will not be affected by the Millennium Bug.

You can view some of their statements on the Action 2000 website detailed below. For example, you can find out some brands of video recorders that won't be affected by the Millennium Bug and some models that will.

Further information

■ <http://domestic.bug2000.co.uk> for more information on domestic appliances or get in touch with the shop where you bought it.

Argos 0870 600 3030 • Comet 0845 600 7002
• Mastercare (Curry's, Dixons, PC World and The Link)
0870 901 2000 • Sainsbury's 0800 636 262 • Tempo
0800 731 9049.

■ NACOSS on 01628 637512.

■ To find out more about the essential services supplied to your home turn to page 7.

Business as usual

The Millennium Bug is an issue that's relevant to every business. And it isn't just something that concerns computers on people's desks.

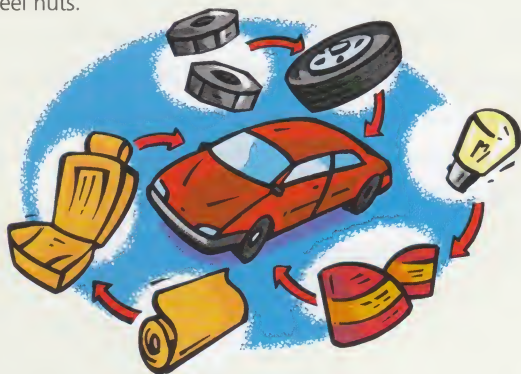
For example it might affect the software that runs payroll, planning and accounting, as well as the equipment that controls central heating, production lines and fire alarms.

Making sure they're ready

Many organisations have been working for years to identify any potential problems and fix them. Tests have then been carried out to ensure any system that uses a year date has been reprogrammed or replaced and can function normally and safely.

Businesses working together

No organisation works in isolation. They all depend upon each other for goods and services. For example a car manufacturer is dependent on the wheel manufacturer and tyre supplier, as well as the company supplying the wheel nuts.



The Millennium Bug is not all bad news for business. Many organisations have actually helped their suppliers, customers and distributors overcome the Millennium Bug threat. The result is not only improved relations between companies, it has also brought about a spring clean for many business networks and helped to improve their efficiency.

What you can do

Check what your company is doing to tackle the Millennium Bug. After all, if its systems aren't working, it could affect you as an employee or breach health and safety regulations. If your company is not yet fully prepared, there is still time left to beat the Millennium Bug. Contingency plans and work-arounds can be put in place so that any problems can be minimised.



If you deal directly with customers then you have an important role to play. Find out about when your company will be opening and the services it will be offering over the holiday period. Then make sure all your customers are aware of these plans. Otherwise they could take their business elsewhere.

BEATING THE BUG

Employees of a large British company would have been locked out of the office after the New Year holiday. Their key cards, used to gain entry, couldn't be programmed to work after 31st December 1999. Fortunately this was discovered during a routine Millennium Bug check and the system was replaced.

Further information

- <http://business.bug2000.co.uk> for information on how to help prepare businesses for the Millennium Bug or call Action 2000 on 0845 601 2000.
- www.open.gov.uk/year2000 provides information on what the government is doing to tackle the Millennium Bug.
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Tel: 0541 545 500.

Personal computing

Since most home computers are used for much less complex tasks than at work, they are far less likely to be affected by the Millennium Bug. However, there are still some sensible precautions to take.

If you use your PC only for games, simple word processing, the Internet, e-mail and graphics all you need to do is make sure your PC will show the correct date after the 1st January 2000.



Changing the date

If you are a Windows™ user and the date is incorrect, type in the correct date in the TIME/DATE setting in the control panel. For DOS, type DATE [space] 01-01-2000 [Enter] at the C:> [space] prompt.

TESTING TIP

Tools to test and fix your PC are available on the Internet and from computer retailers. Be careful if you use them, as you could potentially crash your PC.

http://business.bug2000.co.uk/get_help/tools_index.shtml for testing tips.

Take care with the following

If you use your PC for personal finance, diaries and financial planning on spreadsheets it may be affected by the date change.

If you use any of the above functions, copy your files to floppy disk and make paper copies before 31st December. Then if your PC displays a different date on 1st January, you can remedy it without risk to your data.

Exchanging data and working from home

If you use a home PC for your business or for your employer, make sure it's millennium ready. You could easily pass on Millennium Bug problems when you share information, either by floppy disk or e-mail. Ask your employer to help you test your equipment.



Apple Macintosh™

Apple Macintosh computers are already set up to work in the 21st century.

However, software designed for Apple Macintosh computers could be affected in similar ways to software on PCs, so you need to make the same checks.

Further information

- For information about your PC, contact the shop where you bought it or the manufacturer.

Apple Macintosh 0990 127753 • Compaq 0845 270 4000 • Dell 01344 860 456 • Elonex 0181 452 6666
• Fujitsu 0990 122 000 • Gateway 0800 60 2000
• IBM 0800 973 219 • Mesh 0181 208 4700
• Microsoft 0870 333 2000 • Mitsubishi 0800 212422
• Packard Bell 01628 508200 • Samsung 01952 292262 • Siemens 01252 555 300 • Simply Computers 0870 727 2170 • Time 01282 777744
• Tiny 0870 513 3097.

- http://www.bug2000.co.uk/get_help/software_index.shtml to find the status of the top 500 software products.

- For detailed information on how to check your PC, call Action 2000 on 0845 601 2000.

Services to the home

Your Christmas lights will continue to sparkle through the night and you'll still be able to enjoy a reviving cup of coffee the morning after.



That's because the essential services like gas, electricity, water and telecommunications have successfully completed their year 2000 programmes.

The industry regulators; OFGEM, OFREG, OFWAT and OFTEL have audited these preparations and independent assessments have been made. They are satisfied that these industries will provide normal services without disruption from the Millennium Bug over the Year 2000 date change. As with every other year, disruptions could occur, but if they do it's most likely to be due to problems caused by severe weather conditions.

Water supply

A safe and secure supply of water is a key factor in underpinning the very high standards of public health we

BEATING THE BUG

As part of their Millennium Bug preparations, the UK water industry checked 2,657 water treatment plants, 10,323 sewerage treatment plants, 97,374 pumping stations, 8,213 water towers and 961 reservoirs. All systems susceptible to the bug have been identified, rectified and rigorously tested. In fact, computer clocks on a number of treatment plants have been changed to replicate the Year 2000 date change and are currently operating successfully with dates set in the next millennium.

enjoy in the UK. All water suppliers and water and sewerage operators have worked together to identify and rectify any systems which could have been affected by the bug. The industry has also worked with commercial customers who rely on water supplies to run their businesses.

Power supplies

Bringing gas from the offshore gas fields to your cooker involves many organisations. Each has worked separately and as part of a team, to make sure the Millennium Bug won't disrupt gas services.

Electricity is generated from four main power sources; gas, nuclear, coal and water. The electricity industry has worked with all these suppliers to ensure systems are checked and supplies will be unaffected in the New Year.



Meters

You'll find that meters, except pre-payment meters, simply monitor usage. Therefore the vast majority of equipment, whether at domestic or commercial premises, will not be affected by the millennium date change.

Pre-payment meters with smart cards, however, do use a year date function to operate. So the industry regulator has assessed their readiness.

If you do have a pre-payment meter which needs to be changed or adjusted, your supplier will contact you to tell you how and when this will be done. To ensure you don't have problems later on, please comply with requests such as exchanging keys or providing the necessary access to the meter for the changes to be made.

Telecommunications

For several years telephone and mobile operators have been testing and upgrading their equipment. As a result, they are confident the Millennium Bug poses no risk to UK telecommunications.

This means you'll be able to phone friends and relatives to wish them all a Happy New Year.

Calling abroad

The telecommunications industry has also been working with telecoms providers around the world. The major international connections have been tested and are ready, but less information is available on some countries so you could experience problems calling long distance to relatives or friends. If you do, it could simply be congestion. Please try to be patient.

TELEPHONE TIP

The first hour of the New Year is traditionally very busy for phone calls. If you get an engaged tone or a congestion announcement, please wait 10 or 20 minutes then try again. Using ring-back, or automatic redial only further overloads the lines. If lines are overloaded or there is a fault, there may be a recorded announcement.

The Internet

You shouldn't have any unusual difficulties using the Internet over the holidays. Usage is expected to be heavy so you may experience some delays in getting connected or gaining access to e-mail or information.

If you experience any other problems, and your phone connection has a dial tone, contact your Internet service provider.

Post

All Royal Mail and Parcelforce systems have been checked in one of the biggest projects ever undertaken by the postal service. And their systems are ready to deliver the

first letters and parcels

of the new

century.

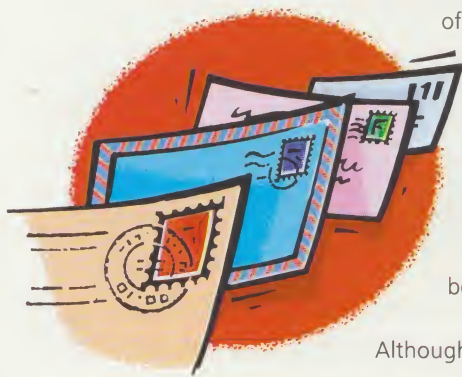
All major

international

postal routes

have also

been assessed.



Although Royal Mail

has no jurisdiction over

international deliveries, they believe any disruptions are likely to be minimal.

Further information

- If you have any queries contact your suppliers directly. You should find their numbers on your latest bill or in the phone book. Record them below in case you need them in the future.

Phone

Electricity

Gas

Water

Many of the utility companies have already provided information to their customers in leaflets or via their websites. You can link to their sites from the Action 2000 web site www.bug2000.co.uk

- www.y2ktelco.co.uk • www.water.org.uk
• www.electricity.org.uk

- Check your local Post Office for mail collection and delivery times over the extended holiday period.

Personal finance

If you were expecting your overdraft to be wiped out by the Millennium Bug prepare to be disappointed.



Banks, building societies, the Post Office and other financial organisations have been working together on this problem since 1996.

They have spent well over £1 billion to ensure they are Millennium Bug free, in order to protect your money as well as their business.

Financial transactions

Every time you cash a cheque, withdraw money or pay a bill, it involves a computer process. Because electronic systems are so central to the financial industry, their preparations have been at the forefront of efforts to combat the Millennium Bug.

So it looks like you're going to have to keep an eye on your Christmas spending after all.

BEATING THE BUG

You might have noticed some of the results of Millennium Bug fixing and testing. For example you can already use credit or debit cards with expiry dates of 00 and beyond.

Similarly because mortgages and loans can run for twenty years or more, lenders have been using dates well into the next century for many years. These are examples of systems that are Millennium Bug-proof.

FICTION

"I've heard the Millennium Bug could be a great tax dodge."



The tax office is fully prepared for the Year 2000. So it's bad news for anyone relying on the Millennium Bug to avoid tax or VAT payments. Like banks, building societies and all other financial organisations, they run regular back-ups, so they won't lose record of your dealings with them.

What's been done

For several years, financial organisations have been re-programming, renovating and replacing any computer systems which might have had a problem with dates in the Year 2000 or beyond.

Extensive tests have then been run to check all systems will operate smoothly. And where any problems were highlighted, remedial work has been implemented

Your money is as safe as it's always been

The financial services industry is now fully confident that your finances will not be affected by the date change. This includes; banking and building society services, mortgages, loans and plastic card transactions, investment management, stocks and shares, life assurance and personal pensions.

In addition, financial firms have been subject to stringent audit by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). In the unlikely event that any organisation is not fully prepared the FSA will take any action necessary to protect customers and their money.

State pensions, benefits and child support

The Department of Social Security has carried out extensive testing and is well prepared for the date change. Your local Social Security Office has also undergone rigorous testing and hundreds of thousands of payment books have already been successfully issued with dates in the Year 2000.

If you would like to know more about your social security payment, get in touch with your local Social Security Office or Employment Service Office – you'll find the number in the business section of your phone book.

More millennium money

Every day cash withdrawals in the UK exceed £300 million. At Christmas and New Year it's even greater. And this year, because of the extended holiday, it's expected to hit an all-time high.

UK banks, building societies and the Bank of England have made additional provisions to cope with the extra demand and ensure there will be ample cash available.

Cash machines

Cash machines too have all been checked for the Millennium Bug.

They will continue to operate a normal service, with more than enough cash for the holiday period.



FINANCIAL TIP

Check with your employer that they have tested their payroll system so that your wages or salary will be paid on time. If your company uses BACS and would like a free Year 2000 test for the payroll system call the BACS Year 2000 helpdesk on 0870 1666 706 or visit www.apacs.org.uk

Banking round the clock

If you fancy spending the New Year holiday sorting out your finances you'll be glad to hear that 24-hour banking services will continue throughout. This includes telephone and Internet banking.



Opening hours

Some banks plan 'Saturday-style' opening on Friday 31st December and Monday 3rd January, which are public holidays. Speak to your bank directly if you want to find out when they're open.

Further information

- If you would like to find out more, get in touch with your bank, building society or financial adviser.
- If you are unhappy with the service you are receiving from a financial institution, there are a number of Ombudsman's schemes which may be of help, if the dispute cannot be resolved with the institution itself. Details of the relevant schemes are available from the financial organisations concerned.

The National Health Service (NHS) has been tackling the Millennium Bug since 1996. All its systems have now been checked and where necessary any problems have been fixed.

This means doctors' surgeries, clinics and hospitals are all fully prepared for the new millennium. Pharmacies and hospitals will have supplies of the drugs you need. And if you fall ill, you'll receive the same standard of treatment and care you would normally expect.

Caring over the millennium period

The NHS has always been a 365 days a year, 24-hour service.

Throughout Bank Holidays and special events its first priority is looking after your health and this year is no different. The NHS expects to be fully staffed with additional people on call or on standby throughout the holiday.



BEATING THE BUG

The NHS has done an amazing amount of work during the last 3 years to ensure that the services it provides are not affected by the Millennium Bug.

Well over 300,000 different types of critical equipment and systems have been checked throughout hospitals, GP surgeries and elsewhere within the NHS. Where necessary, date dependent equipment was replaced to ensure that the Millennium Bug will in no way affect the services the NHS provides.

FICTION

"Hospitals won't be able to cope with all the millennium babies."



Despite all the hype, a Department of Health report has shown that there is only a slight increase in the number of babies due this New Year. So if you're about to become a millennium mum, you can rest assured you and your baby will receive the care and attention you would normally expect to receive.

Family doctors, dentists, midwives, health visitors and pharmacists are also carefully planning their surgery hours and out-of-hours services over the extended holiday period. Check with your local surgery or health authority to find out what arrangements they have made.

Home equipment

If you use any equipment at home to help with disability, you can feel safe in the knowledge that extensive testing found very few problems with medical devices and none that affect patient safety.

If you have any questions, contact either the professional who arranged to provide the equipment or the company that maintains it.



Advice from the health service

Here's some general advice from the NHS to help you keep yourself in good health.

Consult your pharmacist if you, or your family, have a minor ailment. They are qualified to give expert advice on many everyday health problems and can tell you if you need to see a doctor. Remember antibiotics don't work on colds, most coughs and sore throats – your pharmacist will tell you the best over-the-counter remedies to help ease the symptoms.

You should also keep a small supply of paracetamol and other remedies in your medicine cabinet at home. Always keep them well out of reach of children and follow the instructions on the label.



Make sure you're registered with a GP in case you need a doctor over the holiday period or any other time. And to be on the safe side, if you are over 75, or in a high-risk group such as those with asthma, please book an appointment for a flu-jab at your local surgery.

In an emergency

Accident and emergency units and ambulance services will operate as normal throughout the New Year period. Make sure you only use them when it really is an emergency. This will help ease any congestion.

HEALTH TIPS

Keep a note of your GP's emergency number in case you need a doctor out of hours. If you or your family are taking prescription medicines make sure you have enough to see you through the holidays.

Further information

- The NHS will launch an advertising campaign at the end of November, which will run throughout Christmas and the New Year period. It aims to help you make the best use of services over the winter. Look out for it in the national press, magazines and outdoor poster sites, or visit www.winter.nhs.uk
- Your local NHS will publish information about services either in leaflets or in your local paper.
- If you are not sure what to do or where to go call NHS Direct on 0845 4647, 24 hours a day, for confidential help, advice and support from an experienced nurse or adviser. This service is available to 60% of the population in England.
- For those areas not covered by NHS Direct, the confidential Health Information Service is available on:
 - England and Wales 0800 665544
 - Scotland 0800 224488.
- Northern Ireland HSS Boards:
 - Eastern 0800 665544 • Northern 0345 626 428
 - Southern 0800 665544 • Western 0800 585329.

Please write your own contact numbers and information here for easy reference:

NHS Direct 0845 4647

Your doctor

Local hospital

Local pharmacy opening hours

Your prescriptions

Emergency services



We all hope that we'll never need to call on any emergency services but it's always reassuring to know they are there if we need them. The emergency services rely heavily on one another and need to be in constant contact, particularly when they're dealing with the health and safety of the public.

Working individually and as a team, the police, fire, ambulance services and coastguard have now completed their Millennium Bug programmes. This means their systems are free of the Millennium Bug and they can all operate normally. However, the Millennium Bug has only been a small part of their millennium preparations.

Preparing to celebrate

This New Year's festivities are likely to be the biggest celebration since VE Day, which means the emergency services will be in great demand and extra staff will be on duty throughout the public holidays. For example, coastguards will be manning their stations to summertime, peak season levels on New Year's Eve.

In order to help everyone enjoy a trouble-free millennium, emergency services have provided the following advice. General health advice from the NHS and details of their Millennium Bug preparations are outlined on page 11.

999 emergency calls

Three quarters of all the 999 calls received every day are not real emergencies.

999 should only be used to call the police, fire service, ambulance and the coastguard in emergency situations. An emergency is a critical or a life-threatening situation. People who use these services for minor problems may prevent others with life-threatening conditions from receiving immediate help.

If you need the police, fire services or coastguard but it is not an emergency, use the local numbers listed in your phonebook.

You can record them on the opposite page. Freeing up a line for a 'real' emergency could help save someone's life.



What the police say

Help reduce the risk of crime by taking care of yourself and your property. Plan ahead to make sure you can get home safely from celebrations. Don't carry too much cash with you or keep large sums of money at home – the bank is the safest place for your money.

Over the holiday period, why not check up on elderly friends and neighbours, especially those on their own? They'd appreciate the extra care as much as you would. And if you're leaving your home for the holiday, follow the advice on page 3.

If you have any concerns about the security of your home, or your personal safety, speak to your local crime prevention

officer. Or if you think you have information that could help solve a crime, call Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111.

Fire safety

Check your smoke alarm is working and take particular care when cooking or frying, especially if you have had a few pre-dinner drinks.



If you're lighting candles, make sure they're in a sturdy holder. Keep them well away from hair, clothing and curtains and never leave them unattended.

Guard all fires especially when there are children about. And keep wrapping paper, decorations and any flammables well clear of both heaters and fires.

As always, last thing at night, make sure all cigarettes are extinguished, close all doors, and never smoke in bed. Keep all matches and lighters out of childrens' reach.

Safety at sea

Anyone planning to spend the holiday period at sea should remember to check all their safety equipment and procedures, just as you would on any other day of the year.

If you get into distress or you need to report an emergency at sea or around the coast, you'll be able to contact the coastguard in the normal way, by using emergency radio procedures or by dialling 999.

The Samaritans

Christmas and New Year can be a difficult and lonely time. If you need help, or simply want to talk, you can contact the Samaritans 24 hours a day on 0345 90 90 90.

FICTION

"You should always dial 999 when you want to contact the police."



Dialling 999 when there is no real emergency means occupying a line when someone in immediate danger could be trying to get through.

Only call 999 when there is a direct threat to property or life, for example if someone is being threatened or attacked, or a burglary is in progress.

If you come home and a burglary has already taken place don't dial 999 but call the number of your nearest police station instead.

Further information

■ www.mcagency.org.uk

HM Coastguard Tel: 0870 600 6505

■ <http://www.police.uk/report.html> for more information about the Police Millennium Bug preparations.

■ <http://www.fire-uk.org/millennium> for more information about the Fire Services' Millennium Bug preparations.

Please record your local numbers here:

Police

Fire

Shops and service stations



Every festive season shopping becomes more than just a routine task as we all rush out to buy what we need for the celebrations. This year, the extended holiday period could make it busier than ever.

No-one can make the crowds disappear, but a great deal has been done to make sure you don't encounter any problems with your first shop in the new century.

SHOPPING TIPS

- To avoid the last minute rush, why not try to get most of your food shopping done early? If you take advantage of Internet shopping or home delivery, you can sit back and let your groceries come to you.
- You'll find many shops are opening longer hours in the run up to Christmas and the New Year. So why not plan a late night shopping trip and avoid the crowds?
- Check what their opening hours will be over the festive period.

Trouble-free food shopping

Food manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors and supermarkets throughout the country have been working for years to ensure that you won't encounter any difficulties shopping in the New Year.

Checkouts, scales and hardware such as, freezers, heating and quality control have all been checked so that they will work normally from January 1st 2000. The industry is now fully confident that you will be able to shop in the New Year just the same as every other year.

In-store testing

Following extensive programmes to combat the Millennium Bug, many major retailers have simulated the year 2000 to put their systems to the ultimate test.

In certain test stores, systems were set to 11.30pm on the 31st December 1999. As the clock rolled over to midnight and into 2000, all equipment was checked to see if it operated normally.

This allowed retailers to discover exactly what would happen when the date changed and gave them plenty of time to smooth out any potential glitches.

Working with suppliers

Major organisations throughout the food industry have spent a lot of time working with suppliers throughout the UK to guarantee deliveries in the New Year.

As at any time of the year, you may find that some of the more unusual imported foods that are sometimes available, are temporarily out of stock.

Both supermarkets and wholesalers are continuing to work hard with their suppliers, both in the UK and overseas, to ensure plenty of choice is available at all times.



FICTION

"We all need to buy in extra food, just in case."

Just as you do every year, you will need to ensure that you have enough in your cupboard to tide you over the long Bank Holiday.

There is absolutely no reason to buy in extra food just because of the Millennium Bug. An independent assessment of the food and groceries industry has shown that the work carried out by producers, wholesalers and retailers has made the industry ready for the new millennium.

You will be able to re-stock your cupboards between Christmas and New Year and again on the 3rd January 2000 when supermarkets open for normal trading. Some local shops will also be open on the 1st and 2nd January.

Well stocked for 2000

Just as much hard work has gone into predicting what you will want to buy over the holiday period. Every single day, demand for different products fluctuates depending on changes in the weather, special occasions or even because of what Delia Smith cooked on TV the night before.

Retailers are already talking to customers to make sure their Christmas and New Year appetites, however big, will be satisfied. So whatever you fancy for your millennium celebrations, you should find it in the shops.



Filling up the car

Petrol companies also say it will be 'business as usual' over the New Year. Many will offer their customers normal opening hours on both New Year's Eve and New Year's Day and their forecourt shops will be especially useful for those last-minute items.



BEATING THE BUG

Many food items have use-by dates well into the future. So the food industry had to make sure some years ago that their systems, from stock control to check-out counters, could recognise the date '00' as the Year 2000. Chances are you have already bought many products with use-by dates in, or beyond the Year 2000.

Further information

- Check with your local supermarket or shop to find out their opening hours.
- Some shops may also have leaflets or a helpline, which could provide you with more information if you require it.

Record your local numbers and opening hours here:

Local supermarket

Local shop

Other

Your local area

If you're not planning to go away on holiday during the millennium period, you may be thinking about attending a local celebration. Councils, community groups and events companies up and down the country are organising a wide range of activities, so there is bound to be something happening near you.



Not only has a lot of planning gone into the party preparations, a lot of work has gone into ensuring that the Millennium Bug isn't invited along to any of them. If you'd like information on what is going on in your area, your council should have details.

Council preparations

Everything possible is being done to make sure your council is ready for the Year 2000. Throughout the country they have been testing their systems to ensure work is completed on time.

Each council has its own Millennium Bug programme, so you can be sure the services in your area have been checked. This includes everything from street lighting to schools, as well as the systems that calculate your council tax and housing benefit.

Useful information

Councils are planning to publish information before the extended holiday about changes in services, Millennium Bug preparations and events in your area.

Look out for leaflets, articles in the local paper or a millennium section in your community newspaper. You'll find useful information about opening times and important local phone numbers.

Changing times

As with any New Year, the long public holiday and special events will probably mean some temporary changes to the local services in your area. For example, the rubbish may be collected on a different day of the week or slightly later than usual in the New Year. And the operating hours of council services will differ over the holiday period.

Public transport

National rail systems are ready for the new millennium. However, as with every New Year, timetables will differ from normal. The same goes for coaches, buses and underground services. It's always best to check schedules with local and national transport services before you finalise any arrangements.



Local ferries

The major ferry operators and ferry ports have been through a rigorous programme of assessment and are now ready for the Year 2000.

Ferries will be operating a reduced service over the holiday period, so if you are relying on a ferry service you should check with the operator for changes to their timetable.

Roads and traffic lights

Road signalling systems, traffic lights and emergency

roadside telephones will be fully operational throughout the holiday. And if conditions are icy, the road gritting services will be out in force.

However, traffic will be heavy. If you're travelling at busy times, allow a little extra time for your journey. Congestion is also expected where people are gathering to celebrate and councils may restrict access to certain areas.

In addition it is likely there will be more parking restrictions than usual, so if you're attending organised celebrations it may be best to leave your car at home.

If you are going out socialising over the holiday period, ensure you have made appropriate travel arrangements. Never drink and drive. Use a taxi, public transport or nominate a driver who does not drink at all – don't risk it – the drink/driving law will be, as always, rigorously enforced.



LOCAL TIPS

- **Don't miss rubbish collection on the days after the holiday. Check if there are any temporary changes to your normal collection service.**
- **If you're planning to drive into a town centre over the holiday, check that you will be able to park before you leave.**
- **If you're getting a taxi back from celebrations, be sure to book beforehand and to check the price.**

Millennium celebrations

Don't forget you have an extra day to prepare for your New Year's celebrations as the 31st December has been declared a public holiday. Remember to check your local paper and keep a look-out for helpful information on changes to services to ensure that you make the most of your time.

Organising your own celebration

If you've not yet decided what to do on millennium night, you might consider organising your own party. Even though there isn't much time left, there are still quite a few pubs, bars and nightclubs available for private hire on New Year's Eve. To find out what's available in your area, see the 'Further information' section below.

Further information

- BBC Ceefax Travel page 436 • ITV Teletext Travel page 164.
- Rail enquiries 08457 48 49 50
- AA Roadwatch 0336 401 100
RAC Travel 0800 55 00 55.
- For information about the wide range of New Year celebrations planned around the UK, contact one of the following:
www.visitbritain.com The British Tourist Authority.
www.millennium.gov.uk The Millennium Commission.
www.dome2000.co.uk The New Millennium Experience Company.
www.millenniumparties.com for details on venue hire and organising your own party. Tel: 01604 612161.

Record your local numbers here:

Your council

Local bus/ferry company

Taxis

Travelling overseas



A sun-soaked beach, or skiing down a mountain... whatever your millennium destination, the travel industry, including travel agents, tour operators and airlines, have been working together to minimise any risk of the Millennium Bug being part of your holiday.

Bookings

It can take many separate systems in different countries to book a package holiday, or even just a flight or hotel.

At the beginning of the year, tests conducted on these systems were successfully concluded and thousands of millennium holidays have already been booked, without any difficulty.

Air travel

Work, in this industry, began on beating the Millennium Bug in spring 1996, checking and where necessary correcting UK Air Traffic Control systems. Many airlines and manufacturers of aircraft have since confirmed that their aircraft will all function normally.

International air travel

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is compiling information about the readiness of air traffic control systems and airports worldwide. Based on the current information, they consider most airlines should be able to operate as normal over the millennium period where there is a demand for their services. Safety is paramount and if there are any safety concerns, aircraft will not fly.

Sea travel

The safety of shipping in our waters is always a priority. An extensive programme is being carried out by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and shipping companies to ensure normal services over the millennium. Additionally, Eurotunnel completed their Year 2000 preparations and plans this July.

So, if you're planning to cross the channel, there will be ferry and train services running during this period but, as usual at New Year, there will be fewer services on some routes. You should check with the ferry operator, train company or your travel agent before booking or travelling.

FICTION

"I've heard it's unsafe to fly over the millennium period."



At all times safety is the major priority for airlines. Planes have even been tested in flight. Their on-board clocks were set to late December 31st 1999 and they flew over the date change. All systems operated correctly.

The Government and the Civil Aviation Authority have also given their assurance that they will stop planes flying to, from, or within the UK if there is even the slightest concern about safety. In addition, whatever day of the year it is, if pilots don't know if they can land safely they will not take off.

Preparing for your trip

However much has been done to get ready, you could still experience some minor irritating problems at airports over the millennium period.



For example, your flight could be delayed by the extra safety checks taken by the airline or it may take longer for your luggage to get to your destination.

In short, you may need a little extra patience, so pack a good book, some refreshments, any essential medication and games for the kids.

Travel insurance

If you're travelling over the millennium period, check with your travel agent or insurer on the exact cover your policy will provide. Many travel insurance policies contain a Millennium Bug exclusion clause.



For example, should you be unable to travel

to your destination or your baggage is lost either temporarily or permanently because of a Millennium Bug problem, it is unlikely that you will be able to make a claim on your travel insurance.

However the medical benefits from your travel policy will probably stay the same. And any further losses suffered during a delay, if your bags are stolen for example, are likely to be covered.

What to expect whilst abroad

Despite everyone's efforts there is no guarantee that everything in the world is bug-free. Check the Foreign Office advice on your destination before you travel.

TRAVELLERS TIPS

- Have access to several methods of payment whilst you're overseas. A combination of travellers cheques, local currency and credit cards is ideal.
- Carry all essential items in your hand luggage.
- Take a torch – some countries experience power failures, whatever the time of year.
- A battery-operated radio tuned to the BBC World Service will keep you up-to-date with the latest news wherever you go.

If something does go wrong while you are travelling abroad contact your tour operator or their representative and they should be able to help. If you are travelling independently, contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office via the local consulate or embassy.

Further information

- www.fco.gov.uk/travel The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) provides travel advice for people travelling overseas. BBC2 Ceefax page 470; Tel: 0171 238 4503/4504.
- Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) Tel: 0171 890 3000.
- www.year2000travel.org.uk Travel Industry Year 2000 Forum.
- www.abi.org.uk The Association of British Insurers (ABI) have produced an information sheet, available free from the ABI, 51 Gresham Street, London EC2V 7HQ. Tel: 0171 600 3333.

International



Because the Millennium Bug is a global problem, computer and electronic systems throughout the world can be affected.

Whilst the UK is amongst the most well prepared countries, other governments and businesses world wide have been taking similar

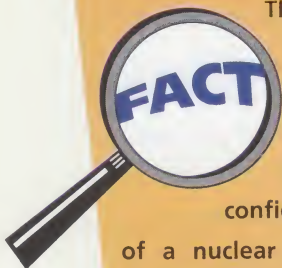
steps to ensure a smooth transition into the next millennium. UK companies have also been working with their international suppliers and partners to minimise any disruption to the supply of goods and services.

The Ministry of Defence has also been working closely with other countries to make sure that multi-national peace-keeping operations, such as those in Kosovo and East Timor will not be affected by the Millennium Bug.

All of the UK's front line service equipment is now millennium ready. Aircraft, ships and army equipment have all been extensively tested to ensure that they will continue to work correctly.

FICTION

"The Millennium Bug could cause nuclear missiles to be accidentally fired."



The UK's nuclear deterrent has been subject to searching examination to ensure that it is Year 2000 compliant. The MoD is confident that there is no risk of a nuclear weapons incident as a result of a Millennium Bug or any other computer failure.

BEATING THE BUG

Telecommunications companies world wide have been working together to test global connections. For example a major test in September this year stretched from the UK to Sweden to Hong Kong via Germany, using a satellite link. System clocks were brought forward and as they rolled over to January 2000, all networks continued to function normally. Other tests have been successfully completed with Australia, North America, Singapore, Spain and Peru. And the testing continues.

Country preparations

All countries may not be equally prepared, and therefore no one can predict what will happen in each country. Do not assume problems experienced in any other country will be replicated in the UK.

The Foreign Office is gathering information for public use and has published individual Country Statements for 125 countries. These will tell you how well prepared a particular country is, including information on transport, telecommunications, financial services, medical services, power supplies, water and sanitation services and distribution of food and other goods. The Country Statements will be updated as more information becomes available.

Further information

- www.fco.gov.uk/travel for Country Statements or phone 0171 270 3000.
- <http://international.bug2000.co.uk>
- www.mod.uk/policy/y2k/faq.htm Ministry of Defence.

Happy New Year

As you will now have read, both the UK government and business have done an enormous amount to combat the Millennium Bug.



However, we do rely on computers and electronic systems in our everyday lives, and not every country around the world is equally prepared for the Year 2000. Also, the New Year period is always a busy time, so you may encounter the odd hiccup.

Please try to be patient, relax and enjoy the extended break.

And finally, we'd like to wish you all a happy, bug-free, New Year!

Further information

- www.bug2000.co.uk for additional information or call the Actionline 0845 601 2000.
- From the 22nd November 1999, check Action 2000's ITV Teletext page 348 for the latest updates on Millennium Bug issues.

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Millennium Bug, FREEPOST HA4441, Hayes, Middlesex UB3 1BR.



**Action 2000 would like to thank the following organisations
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Air 2000; Airbus; Airtours Holidays; Association of British Travel Agents; Association for Payment Clearing Services; Association of British Insurers; Association of Chief Police Officers; Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland; Association of Convenience Stores; Association of Independent Tour Operators; Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Electrical Appliances; Association of Private Client Managers and Stockbrokers; Bank of England; Barclays Bank; Boots the Chemist; Britannia Airways; British Air Transport Association; British Airways Holidays; British Bankers Association; British Electrical Appliance Manufacturers Association; British Electrical Appliances; British Radio and Electronic Equipment Manufacturer's Association; British Telecom; British World Airlines; BTI UK Hogg Robinson; Building Societies Association; Caledonian Airways; Carlson Leisure Group; Carlson Worldwide; Citalia Holidays; Civil Aviation Authority; Cosmos Holidays; Cresta Holidays; Department of Health; Department of Social Security; Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions; Department of Trade and Industry; Eastern Electric; Electricity Association; Equinus; Federation of Tour Operators; Financial Services Authority; First Choice; Flying Colours; Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Freight Transport Association; Futures & Options; Going Places; Her Majesty's Treasury; HM Coastguard; HM Fire Service; Home Office; Inland Revenue; Inspirations Holidays; Institute of Grocery Distribution; Kuoni; Local Government Association; London Buses; London Readiness 2000 Team; London Stock Exchange; London Underground; Lunn Poly; Marks and Spencer; Medical Devices Agency; Met Office; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Ministry of Defence; Monarch Airlines; National Approval Council for Security Systems; National Assembly for Wales; National Health Service; Nationwide Building Society; Nestle; NHS Year 2000 Team; Northern Ireland Office; Office of the Rail Regulator; OFGEM; OFREG; OFTEL; OFWAT; Passenger Shipping Association; Radio, Electrical and Television Retailer's Association; Royal Mail; Sainsbury's; Scottish Executive; Scottish Widows; Somerfield; Sunworld; Telecoms Operators Forum; The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd; Thomas Cook Holidays; Thomas Cook Retail; Thomson Breakaway; Thomson Holidays; Travel Industry Year 2000 Forum; UK Petroleum Industry Association; Unilever; Utilities Group Y2K; Virgin Direct; Visa International; Waitrose; Water UK.

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